

Section I (Amendments to the Claims)

Please amend claims 1 and 2 as set out in the following listing of the claims of the application.

Please cancel claim 3, without prejudice.

Please add new claims 15-20.

1. (Currently amended) An ultra-high molecular weight poly-gamma-glutamate (PGA) having a mean molecular weight of at least 5,000 kDa and isolated from *Bacillus subtilis* var. *chunkookjang* (KCTC 0697BP), wherein the PGA has high moisture-absorbing properties, high moisture-retaining properties, and high Ca solubility.
2. (Currently amended) The PGA according to claim 1, which has a mean molecular weight ranging in a range of from 5,000 to 15,000 kDa.
3. (Cancelled)
4. (Withdrawn) A hydrogel produced from the PGA according to any one of claims 1 to 3.
5. (Withdrawn) Cosmetics containing the PGA according to any one of claims 1 to 3.
6. (Withdrawn) Foods containing the PGA according to any one of claims 1 to 3.
7. (Withdrawn) Feedstuffs containing the PGA according to any one of claims 1 to 3.
8. (Withdrawn) A water-absorbing agent containing the hydrogel according to claim 4.
9. (Withdrawn) A mineral absorption-promoting composition, which contains the PGA according to any one of claims 1 to 3, and a mineral.
10. (Withdrawn) The mineral absorption-promoting composition according to claim 9, which has a sustained release property.
11. (Withdrawn) The mineral absorption-promoting composition according to claim 9, wherein the mineral is Ca, Fe, Mg, Cu or Se.
12. (Withdrawn) The mineral absorption-promoting composition according to claim 9, wherein the PGA is substituted with a copolymer of an ultra-high molecular weight PGA having a mean molecular weight of at least 5,000 kDa and a polyamino acid bearing a positive charge.

13. (Withdrawn) The mineral absorption-promoting composition according to claim 12, wherein the polyamino acid is polylysine or polyarginine.
14. (Withdrawn) A method for using the PGA according to any one of claims 1 to 3 for a mineral absorption-promoting agent.
15. (New) The PGA according to claim 1, wherein the high moisture-absorbing properties comprise at least a 60% increase in water content over 24 hours.
16. (New) The PGA according to claim 1, wherein the high moisture-retaining properties comprise at least 90% water content retention over 24 hours.
17. (New) The PGA according to claim 1, wherein the high Ca solubility comprises Ca solubility of at least 46%.
18. (New) An ultra-high molecular weight poly-gamma-glutamate (PGA) having a mean molecular weight of 13,000 kDa and isolated from *Bacillus subtilis* var. *chunkookjang* (KCTC 0697BP), wherein the PGA has high moisture-absorbing properties, high moisture-retaining properties, and high Ca solubility.
19. (New) A composition comprising a culture of *Bacillus subtilis* var. *chunkookjang* (KCTC 0697BP) and a PGA precipitate, produced by said *Bacillus subtilis* var. *chunkookjang* (KCTC 0697BP) in said culture.
20. (New) A method for production of an ultra-high molecular weight poly-gamma-glutamate (PGA) having a mean molecular weight of at least 5,000 kDa, the method comprising isolation of the PGA from *Bacillus subtilis* var. *chunkookjang* (KCTC 0697BP).